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21 July 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Nasir's Dilemma

1. Nasir still appears a captive of the uncompromising attitudes of his radical partners Algiers and Damascus, and of his dependence on Moscow's support. His room for maneuver is small, and he knows it.
2. Algiers and Damascus continually speak of a new application of force against the Israelis, with Boumediene pressing for a "guerrilla war" of the type that succeeded in Algeria. Nasir can neither envision his Egyptians as really successful guerrilla fighters against the Israelis, nor does he care to turn his country into a guerrilla battlefield--a situation which would eliminate his power base. In desperation he continues to carry on a propaganda battle against Israel and the US, emphasizing the old charges of US collaboration with Israel in the recent war.
3. His admission that he cannot safely negotiate a peace with Israel emphasizes his inability to

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regain the initiative as leader of the Arab world. The fact that Boumediene went to Moscow twice as the spokesman for the Arabs is indicative of Nasir's present weakness among the Arab states as well as his fear that if he went he would return relatively empty handed.

4. Nasir appears to be resisting the Algerian and Syrian sirens by issuing vague propaganda which emphasizes a future "liquidating of the aggression and removing of its consequences." In addition, he apparently believes a limited degree of harassment of the Israelis along the Suez Canal lifts the low morale of the army and improves the regime's image among the Egyptian people and other Arabs.

5. Meanwhile, the fact of Arab disunity and disarray is apparent to all. The inability to hold an Arab "summit" is obvious, and its possibility of success, even if held, is admitted to be "slim" by Nasir's spokesman Haykal over Cairo Radio.

6. Nasir's courses of action open to him at home appear as limited as his opportunities in the foreign policy field. Although he remains his country's leader, his room for maneuver is increasingly restricted by a disgruntled army, an increasingly difficult economic situation, and apparent infighting among his entourage, with some advocating closer ties with Moscow and others arguing for a slight shift to the West.

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7. Nasir has reverted to an old "crisis" tactic of putting out "unofficial"--and easily repudiated--feelers to the US with the hope of eliciting some economic aid and political support. These approaches usually are accompanied by suggestions that the fears the Communists and that differences with the West, especially the US, are not basic and that a new accommodation can be achieved. On the other hand, he lets it be rumored that he is considering some type of closer relation with Moscow.

8. Nasir has not found a solution to his dilemma, and his frustration has inhibited his formulation of a policy. He appears to be waiting to see an opening to retrieve his losses. He realizes that his relationship with the Soviets is ^{more} complex than ever before and that he cannot disengage ~~because of~~ his dependence on Moscow for military aid--now more important than ever before--as well as economic assistance. He can see no return to a balanced position between East and West so long as the US is regarded as Israel's mentor by the Arabs despite his oblique approaches to Washington. He will try to play both sides of the street, but his goals remain more in accord with Soviet objectives.

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